

# Dance your way to better health

**W**hether you are able-bodied or recovering from injury or illness, dance can benefit both body and spirit.

"Dance can help improve balance and coordination," says Louis Biasin, physiotherapist at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, where dance has been incorporated into the line-up of therapy and activities for patients who have had strokes.

"After a stroke, people often have weakness on one side of their body. Dance is a fun way to practice bearing weight with both legs to help improve balance reactions, coordination and confidence," says Biasin. "The smiles on patients' faces are reward enough. Dance is good for the spirit."

Any type of dance and music will do – as long as it appeals, says Biasin. Dance can be adapted to a participant's physical condition. Some in Biasin's group use canes, walkers or wheelchairs. Many dance with a staff partner so they can stand and move to the music. "Check with your therapist or doctor before starting something new," says Biasin.

"Dance is therapeutic on the most basic level," explains Spirit Synott, a well-known Toronto wheelchair dancer, who also teaches dance to patients in the Spinal Cord Rehabilitation Program at Toronto Rehab, Canada's largest provider of adult rehabilitation services. "Dance is a way of being socially



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**DANCE PARTY** Spirit Synott (right) and a patient enjoy dance session.

interactive."

Indar Singh, a patient with paraplegia, was keen to learn to dance in his wheelchair. "Dance is important as a form of self-expression, no matter what condition you are in," he says. "Coming from Trinidad, I've grown up with rhythm in my soul, and dance is important to me."

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